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> [T]he problem of world history appears in a new light. At its core is no longer the evolution and devolution of world systems, but the tense, ongoing interaction of forces promoting global integration and forces recreating local autonomy. This is not a struggle for or against global integration itself, but rather a struggle over the terms of that integration. . . . At the center of this study is the question of who, or what, controls and defines the identity of individuals, social groups, nations and cultures. (Bright and Geyer 1987:69-70)

Ethnographers for nearly a century have been entering the everyday worlds of immigrants and their children to learn about the process of becoming American. We have studied immigration by "being there," by engaging in ethnographic encounters in the places where immigrants and their children live their everyday lives. Numerous classic ethnographies have been produced, yet studying immigration ethnographically could still be considered paradoxical. For while ethnographers traditionally attend to localized everyday experience, immigrant incorporation involves the interplay of transnational, national, and local processes.

While questions of scale are hardly new to ethnography, the dilemma has remerged quite powerfully as ethnographers have turned to study globalization (Burawoy 2000; Perry & Maurer 2003; Hall 1999) and "cultural flows" moving across time, space or levels of social scale (Appadurai 1991, 1996; Comaroff & Comaroff 2003). Inspired as well by developments in

culture theory, anthropologists in particular are turning away from traditional concerns with people in places and place-based notions of "the field" (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). The localized field is being replaced by what George Marcus (1998) refers to as a "multi-sited research imaginary," focusing on the circulation of discourse, the production of social imaginaries, and the forging of transnational networks across levels of scale and connecting people across time and space. For anthropologists, the challenges of doing ethnography now center on questions of scale and, concomitantly, questioning scalarity itself (Tsing 2000).

In my contribution to this volume on ethnographic encounters, I consider how multi-sited ethnography might bring to light cultural dynamics critical to the immigrant experience but seldom addressed in traditional sociological research on "immigrant incorporation." While recent sociological work on immigrant incorporation increasingly emphasizes multi-scale factors (Portes & Zhou 1993), the immigrant experience continues to be framed in terms of concepts of assimilation and acculturation.[1] Culture, in these analyses, is defined in terms of the beliefs, values, identities, and traditions that individuals and groups possess and, as they acculturate, choose to retain or leave behind. Defined in this way, cultural analyses remain focused on the level of subjective meanings or group practices, and seldom look beyond to consider broader processes of national identity formation and its relationship to immigrant incorporation and cultural change.

It is curious that questions of nationalism and of the making of nationalist identities have largely been absent from much of the sociological literature on becoming American. Nationalism has been a taken-for-granted and, hence, largely under-theorized backdrop for analyzing

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[1] Milton Gordon's (1964) model of assimilation, of course, was also multidimensional.

assimilation and acculturation. It is "the host society" to which immigrants adapt, "American culture"—however heterogeneous—to which they eventually acculturate. The nation—the boundaries of which imply the very terms of distinction between migrant and immigrant—is reified as an enduring context within which the immigrant experience takes place. This reification of the nation and of nationalism, I propose, limits our ability to explain fully the cultural dynamics of immigrant incorporation.

What is needed, I argue, is a multi-sited ethnographic analysis of how national boundaries and ethnic identities are created, circulated, debated, and contested across social contexts and levels of scale.[2] Ethnographic research should consider not only how immigrants are incorporated, but rather how "incorporation regimes" are themselves culturally produced (Soysal 1994). Turning to issues of nation-building directs our ethnographic attention to cultural politics in the public sphere where immigrant statuses are defined and debated, citizen rights and responsibilities invoked, structural inequalities challenged, and cultural identifications created—to the cultural processes in which immigrants are made and make themselves as citizens and new national imaginaries, eventually, are envisioned (Anderson 1983/1991).

Before developing this argument further, however, I first consider how issues of culture and scale are addressed in the segmented assimilation model. I turn then to highlight elements of an approach I develop in my own ethnographic work concerned with how second-generation

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[2] My approach to studying immigration draws from a range of developments in anthropology and cultural studies, in particular Aihwa Ong (1999a, 1999b, 2003) on the anthropology of citizenship, George Marcus (1998) on multi-sited ethnography, and Paul Willis's (1977, 2000) contributions to linking ethnography and cultural studies. While the move to combine forms of cultural analyses or to conduct multi-sited or multi-scale ethnography is hardly new, my aim here is to demonstrate its particular utility for studies of immigrant incorporation.

working class Sikhs are becoming middle class British citizens.

The Assimilation Paradigm

For generations, sociological studies of immigration in America—ethnographic as well as survey research—have been framed in terms of a classic narrative of migration and social incorporation.[3] The immigrant experience has been narrated as a journey, as Lisa Lowe (1996) puts it, from "foreign strangeness to assimilation to citizenship." Immigrants, it is assumed, become Americans through linear and irreversible stages of cultural "acculturation" and social "assimilation" into the host society. While typologies differ in the attention given to distinctive dimensions of or routes to assimilation, they share a common assumption that acculturation and assimilation are inevitable and necessary to promote and protect the broader social good.[4]

Over the past fifteen years, studies influenced by developments in the new economic sociology (Guillen, Collins, England & Meyer 2002) have moved beyond single dimension models of "straight-line" assimilation and acculturation to explain the different levels of educational and economic success among immigrant populations. The development of a

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[3] See Morawska (1994), Alba & Nee (1997), DeWind & Kasinitz (1997), Gans (1997, 1999), Portes (1997), Zhou (1997) as well as other articles in a special edition of the *International Migration Review* (1997, 31/4), entitled *Immigrant Adaptations and Native-born Responses in the Making of Americans*, for insightful discussions of the history, current state, and future directions of assimilation theory in the field of immigration research.

[4] The theoretical frameworks for migration research vary widely across the disciplines. I engage in this paper with one among many theoretical approaches to the study of migration, the assimilationist paradigm, which, over the years, has informed both ethnographic and survey research. I consider this paradigm in particular because of the key role it has played in research into cultural change among members of the second generation, the central focus of my own ethnographic work (e.g., Gibson 1988; Portes 1996; Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut & Portes 2001). For an overview of the wider range of theoretical approaches to migration across the disciplines, see Caroline B. Brettell & James F. Hollifield's (2000) edited volume, *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines.*

multidimensional model of segmented assimilation has been central to this advancement (Portes & Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In the 1990s, Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut, and colleagues completed The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), a multifaceted survey of the educational performance and social, cultural, and psychological adaptation of the children of immigrants in American. Analyses of these longitudinal data have made substantial contributions to both the empirical knowledge base and theoretical formulations of processes of segmented assimilation (see particularly Portes & Rumbaut 2001, and Rumbaut & Portes 2001).

Contrary to models of the past, the segmented assimilation theory stresses heterogeneity, both within the immigrant population and the host society itself. New immigrants (post-1965) can be distinguished, they argue, along three dimensions critical to second generation adaptation: 1) individual features or human capital, influenced by educational background, occupational skills, financial resources, and facility with the English language; 2) the host society's reception of immigrant populations, particularly in relation to governmental policies, popular attitudes, and the presence of co-ethnic populations; and 3) the composition of immigrant families (Portes & Rumbaut 2001: 46). The model stresses the interplay between background factors, intergenerational patterns, and external obstacles. Each stage in the assimilation process involves dynamics that occur across levels of social scale. Acculturation is "conditioned" by background structural "variables, such as parent's human capital, the mode of incorporation a group experiences, and family composition. This produces different intergenerational patterns of acculturation or cultural learning, processes typified by either "dissonance" between the cultural orientations of the first and second generation, "consonance" (learning across generations takes

place at about the same pace), or "selective acculturation" among both generations (partial retention of home language and norms).

As Portes and Rumbaut argue, "the central question is not whether the second generation will assimilate to U.S. society but to what segment of that society it will assimilate" (2001: 55). Their analytic framework isolates three "external obstacles" or challenges to the second generation's educational attainment and future career success, including: racial discrimination; labor market barriers (deindustrialization and progressive inequality in the labor market); and inner city marginalization and the consequent influence on youth of what they call "inner city subcultures" (ibid.: 55). Parental factors, modes of incorporation, family contexts, and intergenerational acculturation are all related to ways the second generation confronts these barriers, and the resources they bring to these encounters. Segmented assimilation, then, results from a form of "cumulative causation," or the "progressive narrowing of options for action brought about by the accumulation off past decisions and events" (Rumbaut and Portes 2001: 312). Cummulative causation works across distinct paths where initial characteristics and the reception of newly arrived immigrants facilitate or prevent the future access of the second generation to key moral and material resources. This access, they conclude, or the lack thereof, determines the probabilities of a successful path to social mobility or to "downward assimilation" (ibid.: 312).

The segmented assimilation model provides rich insight into the structural dimensions of immigrant incorporation. Qualitative case studies designed in accordance with this framework have also directed attention to some of the cultural aspects of segmented assimilation. Many of these studies, influenced by the new economic sociology, emphasize how networks and social

capital resources influence interpretations of opportunities as well as life choices (Fernández-Kelly & Schauffler 1994: 670). Using data largely generated from interviews, culture is addressed in these case studies at the level of subjective meanings. Waters (1994), for example, describes "individual variation in the identities, perceptions and opinions" of adolescent second-generation West Indian and Haitian Americans in New York City. She then groups their racial and ethnic identities into a typology that includes three different orientations to being American: "identifying as Americans, identifying as ethnic Americans with some distancing from black Americans, or maintaining an immigrant identity that does not reckon with American racial and ethnic categories" (1994: 802). Similarly, Fernández-Kelly and Schauffler (1994) compare the meaning of assimilation and of ethnic identity for individual children from five immigrant groups: Haitians, Vietnamese, Cubans, Nicaraguans and Mexicans. Analyses such as these tell us a great deal about how people make sense of their lives, but little about how classificatory schemes are produced, circulate, and organize social practice.

To avoid the classic fallacy of separating structural from cultural processes, more attention needs to be paid to how structural factors are shaped by the cultural logics of particular classificatory systems, systems that are expressed, debated, and continually transformed across domains within the public sphere of nation-states.[5] How do structural forces work through cultural forms to configure social organizational relations *and* how people subjectively

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[5] Zolberg's (1989) work on the role of the state in the control of migration flows is obviously related to the processes I am discussing here. I am arguing, however, that such state-level analyses would benefit from considering not simply the political forces promoting immigration or the politics of legislation or policy making, but the cultural aspects of the laws and policies themselves and what they tell us about how national identities and immigrant statuses are imagined in and produced through these discourses. In this sense, my work builds upon Brubaker's (1995) important work on nationalism.

experience these forces and formulate understandings of themselves and others?

Immigrants become citizens through processes of social incorporation, processes that include the formation of social ties with the host society traditionally referred to as "assimilation." But whether and how peoples come to be viewed as "assimilatable," is informed, in part, by broader processes of cultural change associated with the symbolic creation of "the nation" as an imagined community. Imagining the nation and defining the basis of national belonging involve a dual process of delineating boundaries of inclusion and of exclusion. National imaginaries, in this sense, are never simply given, never fixed or enduring. Notions of national belonging and, in turn, national identities and citizenship statuses are continually redefined, negotiated, and debated as they come to be articulated within different forms of nationalist discourse.

The ongoing project of nation-formation entails complex and multiple forms of cultural politics, which play out across a number of sites within the public sphere of democratic capitalist nations—in law and policy, education and the media, as well as in face-to-face interactions in families and ethnic communities. In the context of these cultural politics, "immigrants" are produced as subjects, multiple types of subjects associated with distinctive "minority" statuses that classify those so defined in racial, ethic, religious, linguistic, generational, and gendered terms. It is here, I argue, that identities and subjectivities are "made," here, within the varied forms of cultural production at work within the public sphere.

The cultural politics of nation-formation is the battle-field upon which immigrants and their children fight for inclusion and to shift the boundaries of belonging. Citizens, in other words, are not simply made, but actively participate in making themselves. As Lisa Lowe

explains, immigration experiences are a matter of *immigrant acts*, the interplay between structural forces which "*act upon*" immigrant peoples, defining them in relation to particular ascribed or imposed "minority" statuses and *the acts of immigrants themselves*, through which individuals fashion their own forms of self and collective identities, create particular life styles, and pave future life paths. The complexity of their social and cultural worlds necessarily involves individuals in processes of cultural translation—everyday acts of interpretation, negotiation, and situational performance. I turn now to illustrate these dynamics through a discussion of Sikh immigration and British nation-formation.

Sikhs as British Citizens

Sikhs as a people are associated historically with Sikhism, a modern religion tracing its origin to the birth of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, in 1469. Their homeland is the Punjab, a state in northern India. Most of their historic shrines are found in the territory on either side of the border separating India from Pakistan, an area that was, prior to partition, considered part of Punjab. Over the past one hundred and fifty years, their travels and relocations have created a Sikh diaspora that stretches across the globe. Many among this first generation to grow up in Britain were born to upwardly mobile families, to parents who came to adulthood in the villages of Punjab or in the racially divided cities of colonial East Africa. They migrated to Britain from the Punjab during the fifties and sixties, and from East Africa during the late sixties and early seventies.

The ethnographic study of Sikh immigration, I argue, must be located within a broader analysis of the making of a multiracial postcolonial British nation. In the years that have transpired since the beginning of the end of the British Empire, the colonial ties between ruler

and subject have been transformed into “race relations” between purportedly “equal citizens.” The migration of ex-colonial subjects of color to the imperial motherland in the aftermath of empire represents a final chapter in the history of British colonialism, a chapter that one group of sociologists in their book on British race relations, provocatively entitled *The Empire Strikes Back.*

The story of Britain after empire is one of a nation struggling to come to terms with itself as a multiracial society as its ex-colonial citizens of color challenge the basis of national identity and fight their battles to truly belong. Yet, immigration has hardly been the only force to test the nation’s foundations. Economic globalization, European political unification and the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh assembly have undermined Britain’s political sovereignty. A cherished sense of the cultural “purity” of “Britishness” has become part of the nation’s sacred past, available now largely in commodity form as “heritage” sold to tourists. This, however, is hardly Britain’s destiny alone. In this era of identity politics, contests over culture and claims to rights based on the principles of cultural recognition are testing the modern ideal of the culturally unified nation throughout the democratic world. While the politics of plural publics challenge the nation-state from within, the forces of global capitalism increasingly defy these boundaries from beyond. Immigration in general, and the education and mobility experiences of immigrant children more specifically, must be considered in relation to these dynamic tensions of nation formation within the global era.

The post-war British public sphere has been a contested terrain on which the politics of cultural pluralism and of social incorporation have configured the possibilities and the limitations of citizenship and national belonging. Immigrant incorporation is negotiated across shifting

fields of power and cultural politics in the public sphere, where collective identities, social statuses, and cultural subjectivities are produced in law and policy, education and the media. Sikh immigrants and their children become citizens in relation to what Yasemin Soysal calls an "incorporation regime," the processes through which host societies come to define, delineate, and, therein, produce collective identities and statuses that configure the possibilities and the limitations of citizenship and national belonging.

The process of defining political statuses and determining "minority" rights is a matter of heated political, legal, and policy debate; yet, these statuses, when designated, invoke identities, inscribe social positions, and confer privileges that are officially recognized, legitimated, and accepted by the state and its institutions. Legal discourse and social policies, in other words, constitute group identities and statuses and, in the way these are constituted, forge the terrain upon which rights and resources can be claimed and contested (Benhabib 1999: 298). These "minority" statuses become the vehicles through which citizens engage in politics of recognition to claim rights and assert social needs.

Successive nationality and immigration laws enacted in Britain in the years since WWII and the passage of the British Nationality Act of 1948, chronicle a progressive narrowing of notions of British belonging from the expansionist vision of Empire (which joined all British subjects in an allegiance to the monarch, granting them full privileges and protection, including the right to enter the UK) to the current exclusionary practices of the post-colonial British nation. The legal status of British nationality has been transformed through these acts from a concept of belonging founded upon connections of subjecthood within the British Empire to a notion of nationality based upon what is defined as "a genuine connection" to Britain through a "natural

bond" of kinship and culture. The passage of increasingly restrictive nationality and immigration legislation has articulated an ideology of national belonging, delineated national boundaries, and determined new criteria for who could qualify as a "citizen." Through defining national identity, however implicitly, in racial terms, the law has positioned Britain's citizens of color outside these boundaries of national belonging.

As the government sought to control entry to the nation through increasingly rigid immigration controls, other laws were passed in the 1970s aimed at bringing about the harmonious "integration" of those who had already arrived. Under the auspices of the Race Relations Acts legal statuses have been constructed that protect and provide special rights to groups who meet particular status criteria. These criteria have been defined and further refined within legal deliberations over cases that have been brought before the court. Within these deliberations particular peoples have recognized, and thereby produced, as "racial" or "ethnic" groups.

British Sikhs are subject to a range of political discourses and legal acts granting them distinctive types of "minority statuses." Their status as "immigrants" and "citizens" has evolved in the passage of Britain's increasingly restrictive nationality and immigration acts. Their status as a "racial" or an "ethnic minority" has been constructed in discrimination cases fought under the auspices of the three British Race Relations Acts, passed in 1965, 1968 and 1976. Numerous court battles have ensued to determine whether particular peoples qualify for protection under the law as "racial" or as "ethnic" groups. In Mandla v Dowell Lee (over whether a student in a private school had the right to wear a turban with his uniform), decided in the House of Lords in 1982, it was concluded that, in Lord Templeman's words, "The evidence of the origins and

history of the Sikhs …disclosed that the Sikhs are more than a religion and a culture. . . The Sikhs are more than a religious sect, they are almost a race and almost a nation." While lacking in precision, the judgment clarified that the civil rights of Sikhs were protected under the auspices of the Race Relations Acts.

Legal discourse constitutes minority statuses in efforts to determine who belongs to a nation and to protect the rights of those who do. These forms of political discourse designate minority status on ethnic reductionist terms, terms that assume a homology between a community and a culture. These essentialist constructs, in contradictory fashion, provide the basis for challenging discrimination while simultaneously defining the boundaries of national belonging in racial terms. Yet, processes of social incorporation are not shaped only within the designation of legal statuses and the provision of particular rights. They are founded upon and informed by visions of national unity, visions that provide the rationale for different types of integration efforts. What is assumed to preserve the social fabric of a nation or, contrastively, to tear it apart? And how are cultural differences imagined to contribute to either of these social ends?

The politics of difference in culturally plural nations brings into focus a fundamental contradiction inherent in modern liberal democracies: How can nation-states protect the moral community of the nation while accommodating the diverse and sometimes conflicting cultural beliefs and practices of members of its citizenry? What has been referred to as "the challenge of multiculturalism and the politics of recognition" (Gutmann 1992) strikes at the heart of some of the central presuppositions of liberal democracy. It has stimulated a great deal of debate about the relationship between individual and collective rights, the fundamental basis of forms of civic

solidarity, the value of different modes of social integration and the legitimacy of "minority cultural rights" to financial support and legal protection for their languages and practices, particularly in the field of education.

What Nancy Fraser has characterized as "the eclipse of a socialist imaginary centered on terms such as 'interest,' 'exploitation,' and 'redistribution'" has brought to light a new political imaginary, a politics founded in notions of "identity," "difference," "cultural domination," and "resistance" (Fraser 1997: 11). Social justice discourse, which in the past had privileged class and socioeconomic inequities, has been reconfigured, informing politics that now target cultural domination—forms of disadvantage and disrespect, misrecognition and social exclusion rooted in attributions of difference. This emphasis on cultural injustice, in the words of Charles Taylor, assumes that

> nonrecognition or misrecognition . . . can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simply lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need. (1992: 25)

Across this political terrain, "cultural recognition has displaced socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice and the goal of political struggle" (1992: 11). The political discourse of cultural recognition differentiates people into "members of discrete ethnic, linguistic, and other cultural groups" in need of "public recognition and preservation of particular cultural identities" (Gutmann1992: 9). Within this political imaginary, subordinate peoples gain the power to claim rights on the basis of cultural, religious, or linguistic authenticity in conflicts ranging from battles over indigenous land rights to contests over language education policies (Turner 1994).

The eighties in Britain as in other Western industrial nations witnessed the expansion of liberal politics of recognition galvanized in the name of "multicultural" principles. The rise of politics of recognition, in Britain as elsewhere, both challenged the traditional hegemony of the culturally homogeneous nation and prompted the invocation of objectified cultural and linguistic forms in arguments for awareness and valuation of the linguistic and cultural practices of "ethnic" others. The cultural politics of education in Britain have produced quite distinctive positions concerning education's role in forging national unity, bringing about social integration, and furthering social justice. At the heart of these debates is a classic tension between positions that privilege efforts to nurture national solidarity and provide for the "common good" and those aimed at protecting individual (and group) rights to practice different cultural traditions. These debates, in turn, configure additional statuses for those who, like British Sikhs, find their "culture" and "language" objectified within educational discourse about difference.

Sikhs have found themselves positioned as "culturally" and linguistically" different—as "bilingual" or "bicultural"—within education policies aiming to increase educational equity. But citizenship rights and national responsibilities obviously are not simply articulated or negotiated at the level of "top-down" policy making or legislative actions. To understand the dynamic nature of processes of social incorporation, one must examine how groups so defined as "ethnic" or "racial" or "immigrants" make claims and assert their rights as citizens.

A campaign organized by Sikh parents at a school that was a site of my ethnographic research provided a rich case of this type of citizen action. The parents organized to demand that their heritage language, Punjabi, be taught as part of the school's modern language curriculum. In campaigns such as this one, which I do not have the space to consider here, immigrant parents

instrumentally make use of what political theorist Nancy Fraser (1989) refers to as "the politics of needs interpretation" to assert their rights. Legal rights discourse, provides an avenue for "minorities" to make claims against the state; it creates opportunities for groups to assert their interests under the cloak of liberalism's principles of fairness and equity for "all."

The paradox of cultural pluralism in nation-states is central to debates over imagined future nations and corresponding visions for immigrant incorporation. These challenges will not be easily resolved. Policies infused with tropes like "education for all" and "unity in diversity" cannot resolve the contradictions at the heart of the politics of difference. Contests over culture, discourses of difference, and politics of identity will continue to test traditional notions of the homogeneous national "social order" as the forces of capitalism deepen relations of inequality on a global scale. The paradox of pluralism in democratic nations is no longer simply a national concern, as issues of social integration are influenced by structural inequities grounded increasingly in the workings of global political and economic relations and well as the influence of policies and legislation originating in supra-national political bodies, as in Britain's case, the migration policies of the European Union. Questions of immigrant incorporation, in this way, increasingly imply transnational politics and cultural dynamics.

Conclusion

In exploring the ethnography of immigrant incorporation I have chosen to focus on a key dimension in the making of immigrants into citizens—the cultural politics of nation-formation. There are obviously many more cultural processes at work in the lives of second generation British Sikhs: the role that the media plays in the making and circulation of national, religious, and ethnic representations and political imaginaries; the often contradictory role of schooling; the

movement of youth between cultural worlds in their families, peer groups, and ethnic communal associations; as well as the cultural influences that connect and circulate across transnational diaspora networks.[6]

The Sikh youth that I worked with in my ethnographic study in Leeds, England imagine their futures in relation to numerous possible identities, potential communal ties, and alternative life paths. Their sense of self is molded by contradictory cultural influences in contrasting social settings and transmitted through multiple forms of media. In their homes, at the Sikh temple (or *gurdwara*), as well as in Religious Education classes in British schools, "their culture," "their heritage," and "their religion" are represented in different forms and are talked about and interpreted in distinctive ways. As members of a global South Asian diaspora their sense of what it means to be "Asian," "Indian," or "Sikh" is shaped, not only by culture learning at home or at school, but by ideas and images, film narratives and artistic forms circulating across networks linking Leeds, Vancouver, New York, and Amritsar (the sacred center for Sikhs in Punjab). As teenagers in a capitalist culture, British Sikhs also consume youth culture commodities providing myriad cultural styles and sub-cultural orientations to use in creating adolescent identities.

I chose to focus primarily on the role of nation-formation and cultural politics in the public sphere because in so doing I was able to bring into relief cultural processes that underlie taken-for-granted assumptions about assimilation and immigrant incorporation. A shift in ethnographic vantage-point from focusing exclusively on everyday worlds to the broader

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[6] In my book, Lives in Translation: Sikh Youth as British Citizens, I develop a theoretical framework that focuses on each of these forms of cultural production as well as others that I found to be influencing the process of becoming British and middle class among the young people with whom I worked.

historical and cultural processes in which these worlds are embedded brings to light forms of politics that challenge traditional ways of approaching the immigrant experience in modern nation-states. While a number of sociologists continue to argue for the value of assimilation and acculturation models for explaining immigrant incorporation, viewing immigration from the perspective of nation-formation brings into question the explanatory power of these models and highlights the political implications of viewing immigration through these lenses. Contrary to the type of ethnographic analysis I have briefly described, assimilation and acculturation models leave unquestioned the nationalist projects in which assumptions about "integration" come to be produced as well as challenged. Assimilation models take as self-evident "the mainstream" social order into which immigrants and their children will, over time, eventually fit—to different degrees and in distinctive class positions—and through their efforts will also contribute to transforming. In the words of Alba and Nee,

> [W]hatever the deficiencies of earlier formulations and applications of assimilation, we hold that this social science concept offers the best way to understand and describe the integration into the mainstream experienced across generations by many individuals and ethnic groups. (1997: 827)

Shifting the question to how "the mainstream" or "the nation" comes to be imagined troubles the social reproductive emphasis implicit in assimilation and accommodation analyses. Understanding the cultural politics of immigration and citizenship in the global era is requiring this kind of shift. Multi-sited ethnography enables researchers to illuminate the more complex cultural processes of nation-formation and the contradictory and at times incommensurate forms of cultural politics within which immigrants are made and make themselves as citizens. The path

from foreign strangeness to citizenship is paved by cultural dynamics that work through different axis of power and across levels of scale.

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